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Deep Ecology in the Perspective of Whitehead's Process Philosophy

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Abstract

Whitehead's process philosophy describes the world as an organic world of process and rheology, and the whole universe is an organic system formed by the interconnection and inclusion of various events and realities. Nature, society, mind and even the whole universe are in the process of creativity, and the whole world presents the characteristics of a dynamic absolute movement. Base on the perspective of Whitehead's process philosophy to explore the contemporary ecological problems, it is found that Whitehead advocates a deeper ecological point of view, that is, to affirm the intrinsic value of nature, to indicate that in the face of ecological problems, we should change the concept of nature and the way of life, and to provide a theoretical basis for the harmonious unity of human and nature and the abandonment of anthropocentrism. At the same time, it provides a new way for human beings to deal with the relationship between human and nature.

Keywords

Reality, Process, The intrinsic value of nature, Deep ecology

Whitehead's process philosophy shows that reality is the essence of the world, and reality will continue to connect with other reality through the intake of each other, and carry out the creative process. Therefore, the whole universe is an interrelated process of organic movement, which is not a static world, but a genetic world. From the perspective of Whitehead's process philosophy to see the relationship between human and nature, then human and nature are realistic, are in mutual contact, nature has its intrinsic value. So when we deal with the relationship between human and nature: human beings should learn to change their natural concepts, abandon the view of anthropocentrism, learn to change their way of life. Learn to respect nature, conform to nature and live in harmony with nature. The Whitehead's process philosophy also provide theoretical basis for contemporary energy-saving and environmentally friendly green lifestyle.

1. The natural view of process philosophy

Whitehead clearly put forward the idea of process philosophy in his book *Process and Reality*. Process philosophy points out that the universe is a living and living organism, which is in the process of eternal creation and evolution. The essence of the world is an "organism" (also called "reality") composed of properties and relations. The fundamental feature of the organism is the process, which is a continuous creative process with internal links among the elements that constitute the organism. It shows that one organism can be transformed into another, so the whole universe is a creative process that is endless. This is the basic view of Whitehead's process philosophy of nature.

1.1 The essence of the world is reality

Whitehead's process philosophy is a metaphysical speculative philosophy, but he has always emphasized that his

metaphysical system is based on the combination of empirical observation and abstract rational thinking. According to Whitehead, "'Reality' is the ultimate reality that constitutes the world… The ultimate truth is that everything is reality. These realities are bits and pieces of experience, which are complex and interdependent" (A. N. Whitehead, translated by Bulou Li, 2011). Reality is the origin of the world, and each reality can be analyzed in different ways. At the same time, Whitehead believes that "there is no reality, there is no reason" (A. N. Whitehead, translated by Yan Ai, 2003). The complex nature of reality prescribes the reason for the existence of things, which is not only a completed reality, but also contains unfinished potential. Different realities are transformed into another reality by means of intake, inclusion and elimination, and they are interconnected to form an organic universe that is constantly moving and changing. In short, reality is the material of the process, the reason for the existence of things, and the ultimate entity of the world.

1.2 Process: the way reality exists

Since Whitehead shows that reality is the essence of the world, and reality will continue to connect with other realities through the intake of each other, and carry out the creative process. So how does the world go about this process? How is the connection between reality and reality? Whitehead showed that there are two forms of the process: concrescence and transition. This is what he later called the macro process and the micro process, and the reality is the combination of these two processes, which are both the material of concrescence and the basis of transformation.

Whitehead's analysis of process is based on the analysis of the rheology of things. In ancient Greece, Heraclitus had already put forward the famous philosophical proposition that "everything flows", pointing out the rheology of things. Whitehead put forward two forms of process under the framework of the rheology of things. "One of these two kinds of rheology is the rheology inherent in the composition of reality, which we call 'concrescence'. The other is that in the process of the disappearance of the complete special existence, the existence formed by this rheology is the original element of another special existence caused by the repetition of the process. I call this kind of rheology 'transformation '" (A. N. Whitehead, translated by Bulou Li, 2011). Concrescence is the internal constitution of the reality of special existence, and the reality is an example of concrescence. The world we experience is the material of concrescence. Whitehead believes that we can make different analyses of the material. He calls these analyses feelings. We can examine feelings from four different aspects: (1) the realistic chance of feeling (2) the eternal object of feeling (3) the feeling of feeling (4) the thematic form of the intensity of feeling itself. In the process of concrescence, by eliminating the uncertainty between materials, we can get the feeling of concrete unity in different feelings which is the reality, also known as "satisfaction". But this does not mean that reality is a collection of completed things, but a process, and these realities will become the basis of another stage of the process—"transformation".

In the process of concrescence, we make a sensory analysis of the material, trying to eliminate the uncertainty between things and seek the satisfaction of a specific unity. Then, in the process of obtaining this reality, there is still an eternal transformation between different realities. In his analysis of the materials, Whitehead pointed out that "when examined in terms of the diversity of details of the universe, these materials are the universe, and those diversity are the preceding fluctuations. At the same time, there are various forms lurking in the nature of things, either realized or as potential to be realized. So this material contains what already exists, what would have existed, and what might have existed" (A. N. Whitehead, translated by Donghui Han and Li Hong, 1999). The unrealized potential of the material here is the process of our transformation. The material we can experience is the material that can be analyzed by feeling after being selected. The analysis of the facts that have been realized leads us to the reality of things that is concrescence.

Discovering the form of their common process in different materials, eliminating uncertainty, and transforming these realized realities into potentials yet to be realized is the process of concrescence and transformation, so reality has always been in the process of concrescence and transformation, which is a process of continuous creativity.

1.3 Process philosophy in the sense of genetics

From the discussion of concrescence and transformation, we can see that Whitehead's description of the world is not a static fact, but a process of movement and rheology in the sense of genetics. This process philosophy in the sense of genetics makes Whitehead's process philosophy also known as organic philosophy, which makes Whitehead's cosmology find a new path between materialism and dualism, describing the world as a continuous creative

process of reality, showing a dynamic and creative organic world.

Whitehead clearly points out that there are two types of processes: macroscopic processes and microscopic processes. Fubin Yang concluded: “The macro process is the transformation from the acquired reality to the acquired reality. The microscopic process is the change of various conditions, which are purely real and have entered into a definite reality. The future is purely real and has not become a reality; And the past is a nexus of realities” (Fubin Yang, 2003).

In Whitehead's description of the characteristics of macroscopic and microscopic processes, it can be seen that the community of various real things is an organism, which is not static, but an unfinished state in the process of production. Secondly, each reality itself can only be described as an organic process. It replicates the macroscopic universe in the microcosm. It is a process of development from one stage to another, and each stage is the real basis for the development of its subsequent stages towards the completion of the thing. Each reality provides reasons for the conditions that constitute it, and these reasons are other realities that are objectified for this reality.

In a word, although every reality is completed in terms of its micro-process, it is incomplete because it contains macro-process in terms of its object. Therefore, the whole universe is in the process of concrescence and transformation of an eternal movement, and it is a dynamic organism in genetics. In Whitehead's words, it is “To reduce the universe to a poor tautological absolute with dreams of life and movement” (A. N. Whitehead, translated by Donghui Han and Li Hong, 1999).

2. Deep Ecology from the Perspective of Process Philosophy

Facing the problem of ecological crisis, human beings want to seek ecological harmony in the relationship between nature and human beings. Whitehead's natural view of process philosophy provides the theoretical basis and the thinking dimension of “deep ecology”.

2.1 Theoretical basis of ecological harmony between human and nature

Starting from Whitehead's process philosophy, the essence of the world is the organic process of the connection and transformation of reality and reality, therefore on the issue of subject-object dichotomy, Whitehead believes that “all (real) objects have been subjects, and all subjects have become objects. Subject and object are not two types of real entities, but the same entities examined in different ways” (Jing Cao, 2010). Therefore, nature is no longer a simple object, and human is no longer the only subject, the world is the structural form of subject-object, which explains that human and nature are in a common ecological circle, the existence of nature has its intrinsic value, there is no absolute dichotomy of subject and object, and finds a theoretical basis for the concept of the unity of human and nature. Therefore, facing the problem of ecological environment, the change of human's concept of nature, no longer taking human beings as the center of the universe, no longer thinking that they can control nature is an extremely important change of concept.

Secondly, the universe is an organism in the process of eternal motion, so the process of transforming the realized reality into the unrealized reality finds a connection between present and the future. “If the ecological wisdom of the past cannot be interpreted in the common future of the past, the present and the future, it is difficult to play a role in the present. It is difficult to bring creative impulse beyond reality only by emphasizing the common attributes of human and nature from the perspective of evolutionism. Without the interpretation of the common future of human and nature, it is difficult to extend human values and rights to animals and plants” (Jing Cao, 2010). According to Whitehead's process philosophy, reality is the essence of the world, and reality is in eternal transformation. Starting from the basic process, the present reality acquires its characteristics from the process and extends these characteristics to the future. The past, the present and the future become an organic process. Time is interpreted by Whitehead as a process, and the history of the past, the present and the future find a connection in Whitehead's ontology. This makes people more aware of the current environmental problems, the potential of the future is contained in the present existence, if we cannot better deal with the current environmental problems, all of this will be reflected in the future. When the connection between reality and reality constitutes the primacy of the world, the whole universe is an organic whole, and it is impossible for human beings to survive and develop alone without taking into account nature. Human beings must re-examine the value of nature and the relationship between human beings and nature in order to seek ecological harmony.

From the perspective of Whitehead's process philosophy cosmology, ecological civilization emphasizes the ecological harmony between human and nature, which is a process of connection. Only by examining the relationship

between human and nature from this perspective can we reshape our view of ecological civilization and achieve ecological harmony.

2.2 Implications of Deep Ecology

In the face of increasingly serious ecological problems, different starting points and ways of solving problems will lead to different results. At first, people were accustomed to seeking solutions to ecological problems from the development of science and technology, but soon this way was criticized. Some scholars have pointed out that "how to develop sustainably without harming economic prosperity and interests, this kind of ecology discussing environmental issues from a technical point of view has become 'shallow ecology'; The ecology of questioning human's view of nature and the way of life itself should be called 'deep ecology' (Yutaka Tanaka, translated by Guoguang Bao, 2001). It is a view of deep ecology to explore the solution of ecological problems from the natural view of Whitehead's process philosophy and the fundamental relationship between human and nature.

In the final analysis, to solve the ecological problems through the development of technology is a view of nature based on the interests of people in the technological era, but it does not regard nature as a subject of the universe like human beings, and does not affirm the intrinsic value of nature. Whitehead put forward that the world is a subject-object structure of the process organism, and all kinds of reality are developed in an interrelated way, which makes human beings need to face up to and change their view of nature. We must realize that the key to solving ecological problems does not lie in technology, but in the concept of human beings themselves. How to straighten out the mentality of human beings and the relationship between human and nature, and change our way of life on the premise of ideological change, is the key to solving ecological problems. The concept of ecological philosophy under Whitehead's process philosophy can inspire us to re-examine the relationship between human and nature, to regard nature as a reality like man, and to achieve ecological harmony by changing people's ideas and lifestyles, rather than being confined to the shackles of anthropocentrism, which is also an important basis for the green life advocated by contemporary people.

3. Summary

Human is not the master of nature, nor the center of the universe. "The turn of ecological philosophy is bound to be the turn from anthropocentrism to ecologism, and the turn from dualistic thinking to holistic cosmology" (Hongying Yu, 2003). We have wisdom, so we should learn to restrain and think. The gully of desire can never be filled, if we only blindly allow our desires and interests to dominate ourselves to harm nature, so that we can consider the survival of nature on the premise of satisfying our own interests, then the increasingly bad ecological problem is the answer of ecology to human beings. Both man and nature are subjects in the universe, and they are the process of the combination and transformation of reality and reality, and they are interrelated. The whole ecosystem is also an organic whole, so human beings cannot satisfy their own interests as a prerequisite for survival. We should be aware of the significance of natural existence and the value of animals and plants themselves, instead of regarding them as objects of human activities and subordinates of human development. Survival and development must be interdependent and interconnected. If we avoid the meaning of nature or trample on the meaning of nature, human beings will be punished in the future ecological development, and they will not be able to survive and develop. Human and nature should be one, and they are the real materials of the universe. Only when human and nature first shake hands and live in harmony, and only when human beings re-examine their natural concepts and change their way of life, can it be possible to talk about the further survival and development of human beings.

In the face of ecological problems, Whitehead's process philosophy tells us that we should overcome the view of anthropocentrism, face up to the intrinsic value of nature, re-examine the relationship between human and nature, change our own concepts and ways of life, learn to respect nature, comply with nature and live in harmony with nature, which is the fundamental starting point for us to solve the relationship between human and nature.

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